

VZCZCXRO5797
PP RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHMR RUEHPA RUEHRN RUEHTRO
DE RUEHDS #0192/01 0350508
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 040508Z FEB 10
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7602
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3473
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 1983
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUZEFAA/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 8039

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 000192

SIPDIS

NSC FOR MGAVIN, PARIS FOR WBAIN, LONDON FOR PLORD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/01/2020
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [GV](#) [GB](#) [AU](#)
SUBJECT: AU SUMMIT: ASSISTANT SECRETARY CARSON'S MEETING
WITH GABONESE PRESIDENT ALI BONGO - FEBRUARY 1, 2010

Classified By: Assistant Secretary Carson for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

11. (SBU) February 1, 2010; 11:45 a.m.; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

12. (SBU) Participants:

U.S.
Assistant Secretary Carson
NSC Senior Director for African Affairs Michelle Gavin
USAU Ambassador Michael Battle
USAU A/DCM Joel Maybury
AF Special Assistant Akunna Cook
PolOff Brian Bauman
PolOff Skye Justice (notetaker)

Gabon
President Ali Bongo
Foreign Minister Paul Toungui
Ambassador Baudelaire Ndong

Summary

13. (C) Gabonese President Ali Bongo told Assistant Secretary Johnnie Carson he intends to uphold the strong relations his father, former president Omar Bongo, maintained with the U.S. Bongo plans to focus on developing Gabon's economy, and seeks stronger economic ties with the U.S. Toward that end, he requested bilateral meetings with the U.S. focusing on trade and investment issues. Bongo said he was honored that Secretary Clinton reached out to him for assistance resolving the crisis in Guinea, but that it would take him time to warm to the role of regional statesman. He expressed concern that Dadis Camara, or perhaps another military leader, would attempt to take power in Guinea. On Sudan, Bongo said he feared South Sudan's independence might embolden other regional leaders to attempt a break with Khartoum, leading to a civil war on multiple fronts with destabilizing effects across the region. End summary.

Bongo to Maintain Close Relations with U.S.

14. (C) Gabonese President Ali Bongo assured A/S Carson that he intends to uphold the strong relations his father, former president Omar Bongo, maintained with the U.S. Gabon will continue to promote peace internally and across the continent, he said, and looks forward to working with the U.S. on the UN Security Council. A/S Carson congratulated

Bongo on his electoral victory, and more importantly on the free and transparent process that led to his election. He added that the USG had watched the electoral process very closely, respected its outcome, and appreciated the legitimacy Bongo gave to the process.

Gabon to Focus on Economy, Seeks Increased Trade -----

15. (C) Quickly moving to his key message, Bongo said he was determined to set Gabon on an improved economic trajectory. Democracy cannot thrive in the midst of poverty and misery, he said, and the Gabonese people must be lifted from hunger. Bongo said his father had always regretted that Gabon's investment and trade relations with the U.S. were not stronger, and he is now committed to strengthening them. "Africa doesn't see enough of the U.S." along the economic front, he added. "We see others coming and investing, but not the U.S." Over the years, U.S. administrations have presented Gabon with a "fine menu" of what economic relations could look like if political conditions improved, but they have never delivered. "The Chinese menu is poorer," Bongo said, "but the food is there, and we need to eat!"

16. (C) Bongo requested bilateral meetings in the U.S. to plot a way forward, noting that Gabon fully understands U.S. expectations for good governance and fighting corruption, and will hold itself to an equally high standard as the countries form a closer partnership. As Gabon seeks to improve economic ties with the U.S., "we appreciate that we are being heard" by the current administration, he added. Carson

ADDIS ABAB 00000192 002 OF 002

welcomed Bongo's initiative to build upon the strong relationship with the U.S. established by his father, and agreed that the Gabonese-U.S. partnership could be broadened, deepened, and strengthened. He emphasized the need to work together to create jobs, diversify Gabon's economy, and strengthen the private sector, and agreed that there was great potential to strengthen economic ties.

Bongo Hesitant to Take on Regional Role, as in Guinea -----

17. (C) A/S Carson praised Gabon's stability and its history of solving and mitigating regional conflict, adding that he hoped the new president would continue that tradition. He noted that Secretary Clinton had that history in mind when she requested Bongo's intervention with Guinean Captain Dadis Camara. Bongo responded that he was honored that the Secretary reached out to him on this difficult issue, but said as a new president it would take him time to achieve the regional standing that his late father held. "I couldn't step in unless (Burkinabe) President Compaore stepped aside," he said. "I could not overstep my bounds and create discomfort" amongst my African counterparts. Bongo assured Carson that he would be willing to help on similar issues in the future, so long as he was given time to consider the request and coordinate with neighboring countries.

18. (C) In response to Bongo's request for the U.S. view of the way forward in Guinea, A/S Carson praised the leadership of President Compaore, and said Dadis had agreed to remain outside Guinea for medical care. Guinean General Konate has indicated he will remain in power through the transition, he said, and no military officers will run for national office at the end of the transition period. The U.S. and France will support security sector reform and a democratic electoral process, and will support economic development once progress is made on those fronts. Bongo expressed concern that indicting Dadis for his crimes might drive him back to Guinea, and that many in the military were reluctant to relinquish power. "Frankly, Konate is sick," he said, "and we have to make sure the civilians don't blow it and open the door for a military return to power." Carson replied that he understood Bongo's concerns, that he was meeting with the

likely presidential candidates, and the U.S. Embassy in Conakry was delivering a firm message to act responsibly to all concerned parties.

Concerns over Southern Sudanese Independence

19. (C) On Sudan, Bongo expressed concern that if southern Sudan votes for independence, other regions - including Darfur and the far north - will be emboldened to follow suit. Khartoum will not sit by and allow that, he said, and a Sudanese civil war fought with breakaway regions on multiple fronts will affect the entire region. Bongo further suggested that even if neighboring states were to request that the south postpone the 2011 referendum, it would refuse so long as President Bashir is in power. Carson responded that all parties are bound by the CPA, and we must honor the rights it grants the south. He further noted it would be political suicide for any southern Sudanese leader to propose postponing the referendum.

YATES